

'A'  
 DISCOURSE  
 AGAINST  
 BRIBERY,

Especially in the ELECTION of  
 Members of PARLIAMENT.

BEING A  
 SERMON

Preached at *Boston* in the County of *Lincoln*:

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*Defossa in oculis, quos sportula fecit amicos.*

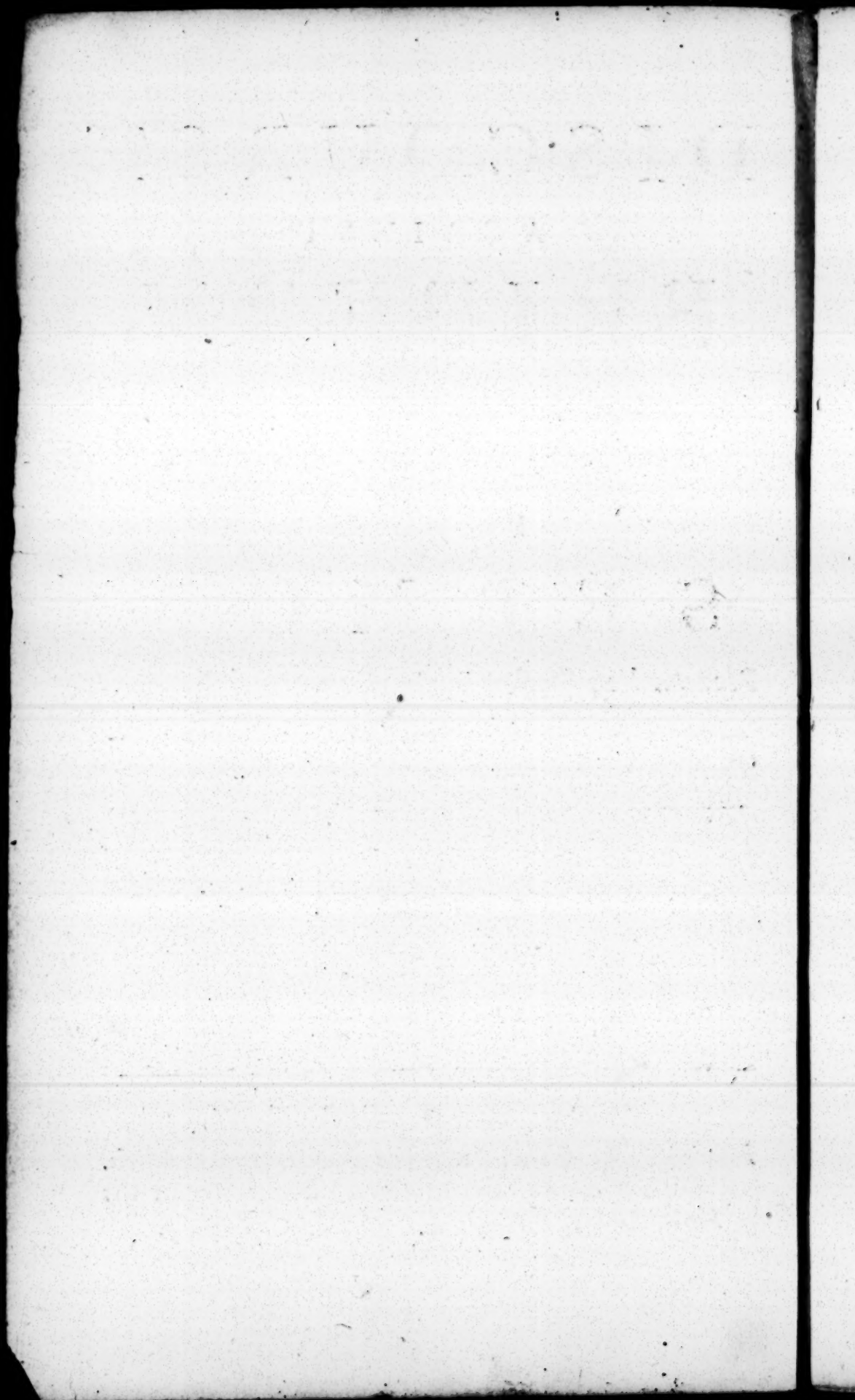
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E D I N B U R G H,

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## D E U T. xvi. 19.

*For a Gift doth blind the Eyes of the Wise, and pervert the Words of the Righteous.*



**T**H E Crime censured in these Words, is what we call *Bribery*. The Nature and Greatness of which Sin, together with the ill Consequences which attend it, I purpose to lay before you in the ensuing Discourse, which I shall conclude with a Word or two of Application to them that hear me.

I. And, *First*, I shall consider the Nature of it. A Bribe I look upon as a Reward given to another, for an unlawful Purpose, or upon an unlawful Consideration; as when either the End we have in View is in itself unlawful, or the Means, whereby we seek to obtain it, are unlawful and blameable.

Thus, To seek for an unjust Sentence in Judgment, or to overthrow a righteous Cause, is such an End as no Man can lawfully purpose or intend; and, if he does, it is Sin. To pursue this End, by corrupting the Bench, or suborning Witnesses, is to use wicked Means for the Accomplishment of that

wicked End: And a Reward given upon such an Account, we call a **Bribe**.

To seek for an Office, either in Church or State, for which we are duly qualified, is in itself lawful, and becomes sinful only by the Mixture of some sinful Circumstances in our Design; as if we propose to ourselves our own Glory or Interest, more than the Glory of God, or the Interests of Religion; if, under Pretence of serving our Country, we intend principally to serve ourselves; or, under Colour of a more than ordinary Concern for the publick Safety, we propose really to strengthen Faction, to keep up a Party, or carry on a Design, which we blush, or are afraid to own in the Face of the World.

These, and such like unhandfom Ingredients, will render any End, whatever it is we aim at, tho' in itself lawful, and very commendable, yet to us unlawful and criminal.

But else, as we observ'd before, there is nothing criminal in seeking an Office which we are capable of discharging, with Glory to God, Benefit to Men, and Credit and Reputation to ourselves.

Only, when we pursue this End by such Means and Ways as the Laws of God, or the Laws of our Country, have forbidden; when we purchase those Employments and Honours for Reward, which by Law we have no just Title to wear, except they be freely given us; this is a wicked Method of pursuing a Design in itself not wicked. Every Gratuity given upon such Accounts, is a Bribe; and the Giver, as well as the Receiver, are equally guilty of the Sin of Bribery.

A Sin it is of the vilest Parentage. It is the Child of Avarice, curs'd Ambition, Faction, and Treachery;



Treachery; and gains Admission nowhere, but in the most deform'd, crooked, and canker'd Souls. He that gives Bribes for the Accomplishment of such his Purposes, does it sometimes for his own Sake only, to satiate a covetous, or to gratify an ambitious Mind, in the Accomplishment of some Design which he dares not own; sometimes to strengthen the Hands of Faction, Schism, Latitude, and Infidelity, under the plausible, and, indeed, very venerable Names of *Revolution* and *Moderation*. Either he makes Merchandize of the unwary Multitude, and buys an Interest among little People, that he may sell it among the Great; or his Ambition aims at something above his Merit; which therefore he despairs to reach, unless the Lowness of his Station may be supply'd by the Height of his Station; or some naughty Passion in him cannot be gratify'd upon other Terms. His Party wants him, and the Faction he has espoused must be supported: And therefore, no Art or Means in his and their united Power, howsoever disingenuous or unlawful, shall be wanting to enable him to do them Service.

And what makes the Sin more abominable, is, That such a Trader in Corruption, together with his Agents, Complices, and Under-Pullers in Iniquity, whilst they carry on their ungodly Traffick, put themselves under a Necessity of debauching Mankind, and drawing others into the same Guilt with themselves. For so it is, in this Sin, as well as in many others, we are not alone in the Crime, but hook in our Brethren to be Partakers with us. No Man can make his Market in this Trade of Mischief, without tempting others into the Snare, to barter with him for their Integrity and Honour, for their Souls and Consciences. To this End, he plants his Batteries against their weakest Part, and makes his Advan-

Advantage of their Poverty, their sordid Covetousness, their Ignorance of their Duty, or some other Corruption and Infirmity in their Nature. Alas! Unhappy is it for weak, simple, and unwary Men, depress'd and discouraged by the Poverty and Sadness of their Condition, to fall into such traiterous Hands, which, like the grand Tempter and Murderer of Souls, bereave them, by their foul Artifices, of their Innocence, their Honour, and Honesty, even of every Thing that justly is, and ought to be dear to them; and having once got 'em into their Net, keep them there, the future Slaves of their arbitrary Will and Pleasure.

Such is the Aggressor's Share of the Guilt, who, by such vile Arts, takes Advantage of the Avarice, Poverty, or other Infirmity of his Brother, for the Accomplishment of his own ungodly Ends and Designs. But, is the Receiver of a Bribe, in the mean Time, innocent? By no Means. Nothing, not Poverty itself, is sufficient to screen him from having also a very great Part of the Sin to answer for himself. 'Tis true, in the first Overtures, probably, he is passive. He does not, perhaps, with a Forehead of Brass, offer his Tongue to Auction; but meets with the Temptation thrown by the Ministers of Satan into his Way, hugs and embraces it, and rejoices over the Treasure which he has unexpectedly found. But, is it a sufficient Excuse for our Sinning, to say, That we were tempted? Alas! what Sin is there that shall want an Excuse, if this be one? Temptations are permitted by the Providence of God, to try our Constancy, not to excuse our Falling: And Poverty is suffer'd to come upon us, not because God delights to see us under Affliction, but for this End especially, among others, to try if we dare be honest in the Midst of our Poverty, and sacrifice

erifice worldly Considerations to a good and upright Conscience. So that, it is plain, no Pretence of this Kind can either justify or excuse us, neither our being poor, nor our being tempted by any other Circumstance of our Condition, nor any of those wretched Fig-Leaves wherewith Sinners usually seek to hide their Shame. St. *James* will give us a much better Account of all this Matter : *Let no Man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; ( which every Man does, who excuses his Sins with the Permissions of Providence ) for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man : But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed.* So that we must look at home for the Cause of this, as well as all our other Sins, even to the Wickedness of our own Hearts and Minds.

True it is, that some, especially among the poorest of our People, are brought into these Measures, thro' a Want of good Sense, and serious Consideration of what they are doing. And this is the best Article that can be offer'd in their Excuse. Whilst they suffer themselves thus to be made the sorry Tools and Accomplices of ill Mens Designs, they are wholly intent upon the Means of supplying their present Wants, and removing the Difficulties they struggle under ; and almost any Proposal is welcome, that will facilitate this. Beyond their own domestick Affairs, they are not at Leisure to extend their Thoughts ; are not aware what a Trust the Government has reposed in them ; and consider not the Obligations they ly under, to discharge it faithfully and well.

In the mean Time, this is no sufficient Excuse, tho' it is the best that even Charity can suggest. But Charity itself cannot extend it to all who are concerned in this foul Work. Too often it comes to pass,



pass, that our Willingness to accept a Bribe, proceeds not from the real Poverty of our Condition, but from our insatiable Avarice, an inextinguishable Thirst of growing rich, a Principle which will suffer no other Principle to subsist with it, but will quickly devour all the Seeds of Religion, Loyalty, and common Honesty, planted in us either by Nature, Education, or the Grace of God. Possess'd with such a Devil, what can the World think of us, or we of ourselves, but that, whatever our Pretences may be, we are really Men that have no Fear of God before our Eyes? That our whole Religion is only to worship *Nebuchadnezzar's* golden Image? and that our Love and Loyalty to our Country, centers in making ourselves the richest Men in it? Scarce any Mischief is there, which a Man under such a malignant Influence will not concur with. For a Bag of Money, for a Place, nay, even for a Piece of Bread, or a drunken Treat, he will sell his Sovereign, his Country, the Church he is Member of, to any one that can make the Purchase; to Men whom he knows not; to those, who probably gape for the Ruin of some, if not all these; and who, a wise and good Man would think, are therefore unfit to serve in a publick Station, because they use such unworthy Means to obtain it.

II. Having thus, in general, considered the Nature, let us, in the *Second Place*, take a short View of the Greatness of this Sin of Bribery. And,

I. We cannot be guilty of such a Corruption, but we are highly unjust to the Community whereof we are Members. All Bribery, whether in Judgment, or in Elections to publick Stations, or in any Case whatsoever, is always unjust, as the Words going along with my Text do directly imply: *A Gift doth blind the Eyes of the Wise*, says *Moses* in my Text,



**Text, and pervert the Words of the Righteous :** *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live.* Fidelity, Obedience, and a hearty Endeavour to support the Government, are the fundamental Duties of Subjects to Sovereign Powers, which, who-soever is defective in, can by no Means pretend he is just to his Governors, or true to the Obligations he lies under. And how has he discharged these Duties, who violates the Laws, who makes Sale of his Conscience, prefers his private Lucre before the Good of his Country, and is influenced by a secret Gratitude, in one of the most important Instances wherein the Government requires his Service?

2. It is an Act of the most perfidious Baseness and Treachery. To betray a Trust was always condemned, even by the Morality of *Heathens*, much more of *Christians*. And the greater the Consequence, Value, and Importance of the Trust is, the greater, in Proportion, is the Wickedness of betraying it. Now, what greater secular Trust can be lodged in our Hands, than a Right to nominate the Persons who shall act for us in the greatest Affairs that concern our Country? A Privilege which renders us easy and happy beyond our Neighbours, of whom all admire, and some envy a Felicity which they enjoy not. But what shall we say then to those wicked and inconsiderate Men, who betray such a Trust, who sell, barter, and trifle away so valuable an Interest for a sorry Pittance of Money, for a Meal, for a drunken Surfeit, in Defiance of all Laws both of God and Man; and thereby do what in them lies to betray their native Country to any that will buy it? Is it not Pity, that such Men should have ~~such~~ a Trust lodged in their Hands? And were it not just, by Law, to deprive them of a Privilege they so little value, and so sadly abuse?

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I might add, *Thirdly*, That, as few Sins come single and solitary, so I doubt this of Bribery ( in that Instance especially, which, at this Time, I chiefly insist upon ) is attended with Perjury too ; in that it is hardly reconcilable either with our Oaths of Allegiance interpreted, as they ought to be, in their full Extent ; or, with those other Oaths imposed by the Municipal Laws of every particular Corporation or Body Politick, upon all such as they admit to their Franchises and Privileges.

But I hasten, and shall finish this Article with a Recital, *Fourthly*, of some of those many Passages in Scripture, wherein this Practice is condemned, threatened, or punished. It is plainly condemned and forbidden in my Text. It was before forbidden, *Exod.* xxiii. 8. almost in the same Words. In *Job* xv. 34. we are told, *That the Congregation of Hypocrites shall be desolate, and Fire shall consume the Tabernacles of Bribery.* Solomon styles him *a wicked Man, who taketh a Gift out of the Bosom, to pervert the Ways of Judgment.* *Gehazi*, when he accepted the *Syrian's* Presents, received his Leprosy too, and stands upon Record a lasting Example of the Divine Justice and Vengeance.

But your own Observation has, I doubt not, already collected many Sentences out of Holy Writ to the same Purpose, which abound in the Complaints of the Prophets, and more especially in the Book of *Proverbs* ; some of which will, probably, fall in our Way, before we have finished this Discourse.

III. I proceed therefore, *Thirdly*, to lay before you the mischievous Effects and unhappy Consequences this Sin is attended with, to our Country, to Religion, and to ourselves.

And, *First*, If this Sin grow to be frequent and general, ( as we have Cause enough to fear, if we credit the daily Complaints of it ) our Constitution,  
both

both in Church and State, cannot but be affected by it in a terrible Manner.

The World knows too well, that there are Men who watch for the Ruin of Religion in general, especially the Religion and Worship of the Church of *England*. And if these Men can, by Bribery and Corruption, screw themselves into Power and Authority, shall we think our Candlestick safe in such Hands, at least, that Religion shall not in some or other Respect be a Sufferer by it?

In the mean Time, our Civil Interests are as little safe under such Practices, as our Ecclesiastical. For Bribery destroys Faith and mutual Confidence, the Foundation of all humane Society and Government; it violates the most sacred Engagements, and exposes the strongest Obligations to Sale.

If it creep into our Houses of Judgment, the Poor only shall suffer, while the Rich and Guilty go free. It will soon stop the Course of Justice among us; our most excellent Laws and Statutes will then become worse than a dead Letter, even a cruel Instrument in the Hands of rich, potent and great Opposers, to crush and destroy their fellow Christians; and our Case will soon be like that of the *Jews* in *Isaiah's* Time, of whom he complains, *Cap. i. Every one loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards; they judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come unto them.*

But this Evil, great in itself, is comparatively little, when we remember that such Practices will bring the Constitution itself into Danger, and shake, if not break in Pieces, the whole Bulk and Frame of our Government in both its Parts, the Civil State as well as the Ecclesiastical. This an inspir'd Politician has told us, *Solomon*, a wise and mighty Prince, *Prov. xxix. He that receiveth Gifts, overthroweth the Land:*  
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He takes the direct Way, and does what in him lies to overthrow it.

Safe and happy are we, whilst Men of approved Worth, and liberal and honourable Education, of great Abilities, and of known, unsuspected, and untainted Integrity and Affection to our Government, in Church and State, are pitch'd upon to act for us in our publick Concerns. Such will neither undermine Religion, nor betray basely the Liberties they are entrusted with, nor (under Pretence of securing these) attack the just and ancient Prerogatives of the Crown, nor pursue any By-Ends, any private separate Interest, to the Prejudice of the Publick.

But, whilst every Man (as the wise *Solomon* has it) is a Friend only to him that giveth Gifts, Persons of good and generous Minds disdain such base, disingenuous, and ungenerous Methods of compassing their Designs; Methods condemned both by God and Man; and hereby such Men are kept from serving the Publick, who alone are fit for it; whilst mercenary Souls, by clandestine Arts of Bribery, get in to do Mischief. Certainly, when, for Want of Merit, *a Man's Gift must make Room for him. Prov. xviii. 16.* when we cannot discern his Worth, unless, like the Messengers of the King of *Moab*, he come with *the Rewards of Divination in his Hand*, to open our Eyes; when his Merit and Capacity is measured by his Profuseness in distributing to us large Wages for those Suffrages, which ought, in all Senses, to be free, unbought, as well as uncompelled; then we have Reason to fear the Consequences. Such a Man will, undoubtedly, sell in another Market what he has bought in this. There is Reason to expect it; cunning Merchants do not use to lay out their Money, but with a Prospect of Gain: And, we may depend upon it, there is nothing so valuable to us, but, so far as in him lies, if

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Occasion serves, it shall be made a Sacrifice to his private Interest; and who shall blame him for this? Not they, surely, who received Pay under him, for selling again, to the best Advantage, that which they sold him.

We are, *Secondly*, to consider what the Consequences are to the particular Interests of those who are guilty of this Sin. Not wordly Prosperity, to be sure: For we have already learned from the Book of *Job*, that *Fire shall consume the Tabernacles of Bribery*. 'Tis true, they may flourish a little while; but *Solomon* will tell us what the final Event is of such unlawful Acquisitions: *The Treasures of Wickedness profit nothing; and Wealth gotten by Vanity* (that is, by wicked and unjust Methods) *shall be diminished*. In a Word, all the Curses that are due to foul Injustice, Perjury, Treason and vile Perfidiousness; all the heaviest Judgments of God will be the final Reward of Bribery. Like *the Waters of Jealousy*, it will cause the *Belly to swell, and the Thigh to rot*. It brings Ruin upon us, and all that belong to us; Disgrace, Beggary, and utmost Contempt here, and (without Repentance) eternal Damnation hereafter. *He that is greedy of Gain troubleth his own House*, (the wise Moralist tells us) *But he that hateth Gifts shall live*. And for this Sin, particularly, the Prophet *Amos* denounces a national Judgment upon the *Israelites*; *Thus saith the Lord, for Three Transgressions of Israel, and for Four, I will not turn away the Punishment thereof; because they sold the Righteous for Silver, and the Poor for a Pair of Shoes*. It works a Kind of Witchcraft upon the Soul, or (in *Solomon's* Language) *destroyeth the Heart*; which Expression is interpreted by the Words of my Text, *A Gift blindeth the Eyes of the Wise, and perverteth the Words of the Righteous*. It seduces the Affections, captivates and hoodwinks Reason, which is the Eye of the

the Soul; and teaches us with our Mouths to utter Things contrary to the Dictates of our Hearts, inconsistent with Truth, Reason, Religion, and common Honesty. It draws, by Degrees, a Veil of Ignorance over the Understanding, and hinders us from discerning Things in their true Colours. It destroys Principles, obliterates and blots out the Notices of Good and Evil, which God himself planted within the Mind, razes out the Image of God from thence, and, instead thereof, places that of the Devil. It hardens the Heart, as much as may be, to render it incapable of better Impressions; and ripens the Soul, beforehand, for that Damnation which waits for it in another World.

Such is the Nature, so great is the Guilt, so horrid the Consequences of this Sin of Bribery. I have nothing more to add now, but only to apply what I have said to them that hear me.

1. To those (if any such be in this Place) who are, or have heretofore, been guilty of this Sin, what shall I say to you? Shall I address my self to you in the Apostle's Language? *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, &c.* 1 Cor. iv. 8, 10, 12, 13, 14. I forbear the rest; neither is it my Design, by speaking *these Things*, to shame you; but, as my beloved Brethren, I warn you.

I warn you, in the first Place, to consider what you have done; how great a Scandal these Things cause to Religion; how irreparable an Injury they will, in Time, bring to the Publick; how ill an Example is hereby given to your Fellow-Christians; and, especially, how deep a Wound is inflicted upon your own Souls.

\* This holy Place, where we are met together for  
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\* In Boston, the Poll for Burgesses to serve in Parliament, is always taken in the Parish-Church; which unhappy Custom is since confirmed by Law.

the Worship of God, is *the House of Prayer*; Will you then make it a Den of Thieves? Will you sell your Brethren in it? Methinks the very Roof you are under, when you remember whose it is, should keep your Consciences in Awe; and, in the first Place, make you afraid to do an ill Thing here; in the next Place, strike you with a sacred Horror, and deep Repentance, when you have done it, and reflect on what you have done.

For, 2. All that can be done more, being made sensible of your Sin, is to warn you, that you repent, and do so no more for the Time to come. There is Room for Repentance, if it be not delayed, till the black Impressions of your Sin be so long fix'd in the Soul, as to become a Part of its Complexion, and too difficult to be effaced. One Part of Repentance is Restitution: But, alas! what Restitution can you make for the Injuries you have done the Publick? Let, therefore, your Repentance be the more perfect in other Respects, in that it is defective in this. Be more devout and earnest in Prayer to God for your Pardon; and that it may please Him to preserve your Country from those Evils which you have helped to bring upon it; and, hereafter, be upon your Guard. Arm your selves against every Tempter. Let not your Poverty induce you to distrust Heaven, much less to do an ill Thing for your Relief; but throw your selves into the Arms of the Divine Providence, who never fails to take Care of them that dare be innocent in their pressing Necessities, and trust him for their Support.

2. I must apply my self to you in general, and, with all possible Earnestness, beseech you to have a Care of making any Approaches to such a Sin as this is. Be not Slaves to Money. Do not set a Price upon your Birthright, upon those Rights and Liberties  
which



which make this Mighty Kingdom Glorious in the Eyes of the wide Universe. Sell not yourselves Bondmen to those that have no other Merit but a Purse to command your Interest. Betray not your Country for Gold, neither disgrace your selves by such sordid, as well as perfidious Actions; but act like *Christians* and *Britons*, like generous, honest, and brave Men.

And remember, that a Day is coming, when God will call these Things to strict Account, *will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; when (as the Prophet expresses it on another Occasion) it shall be, as with the Buyer, so with the Seller; as with the Lender, so with the Borrower; as with the Taker of Usury, so with the Giver of Usury to him.* The one as well as the other, shall be judged for all their clandestine Crimes. *Their Silver and their Gold shall not be able to deliver them in that Day of the Wrath of the Lord.* In the mean Time,

May the Eternal God give us Grace so to order our Lives now, that we may attend that Day with Courage, and a comfortable Assurance of *entring then into the Joy of our Lord, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, &c.*

F I N I S.





Argyle's Levee or Duke Daniel  
By Lord Binning -

With other honest Scots one day  
I waited on Argyle;  
Than whom no better Patriot breathes,  
In all the British Isle.

Sing, Muse, that never I sing before;  
How well we were receiv'd,  
And what he said and eke also  
How Nobly we behav'd.

Long while we had not held chit chat,  
Before his grace appear'd  
And with his ever pleasing air,  
Our hearts & faces cheer'd,  
When beck'ning us all one by one  
He spoke to each so pat  
That all rejoic'd his Levee left  
But I who smell'd a rat.

These to Anstruther, in the van,  
Advancing, were the words.

"Nor ours nor any foreign land  
"A Hawk like yours affords,  
"So Richmond, Duke of Hawk's, the Judge;  
"Asur'd me t'other day,  
"Phillips bow'd low & thank'd his grace  
And went well pleas'd away.

Next Brodie forward made a step  
In whose attentive ear,  
The Duke was pleas'd to whisper, but  
So loud as we could hear;  
, That all the Ladies in the town,  
, Said No man kiss'd so well,  
The Laird laugh'd much & thank'd his grace,  
But said they should not tell.  
Then to Culloden said the Duke,  
, Now tell me John sincere,  
, Whether eight bottles 'tis, or ten,  
, You drink to your own share?  
John shook his head, & thank'd his grace  
For such a friendly word,  
Then vow'd to God his grace was like  
An angel of the Lord.

To Colonel Sinclair to other day  
, I was surpris'd to see  
, The British Coffee house so chang'd  
, From what 'twas wont to be  
, 'Tis most polite, and such charms,  
, As God my Soul shall save  
For a whole Lefson hearty thanks  
The grateful Colonel gave.

The Advocate with reverence great,  
Approaching now to speak,  
Was like the rest at once struck dumb  
By cheek apply'd to cheek;

'The Lawyer's in our house declare  
'That no man pleads like you  
'Your Rhetoric charms: then Duncan bow'd  
And own'd his grace said true.

The Colonells Jack & Peter draw  
Together near his grace  
'Peter thou hast a Martial soul  
'And Jack a handsome face  
'Were you two blended both in one  
'Lord! how you'd look & fight  
Jack crowing wheel'd off to the left  
And Peter to the right.

Six times Had Henry bow'd unseen  
Before he durst advance  
At last, ~~the Duke~~ addressing him the Duke  
'I said sure you've been in France,  
'A more polite & courteous man,  
'I never knew before;  
He bow'd & blush'd & blush'd & bow'd  
And strutted to the Door.



When Colonel Middleton approach'd  
A necessary Man  
Who might have, if the muse had pleas'd,  
Been welcom'd in the van.

My friend I hope your Lady's well  
Shes well to serve your grace?  
Both smil'd & bow'd, and smil'd again  
In one another's faces.

So Provost Wm who made a leg,  
Well honest Skip, said he,  
Skip bow'd and was well pleas'd to that  
His grace then turn'd to me.

Alas Charles, blood & wounds my Lord,  
Answer'd; And his grace  
Was going to reply, when lo  
Great Daniel shew'd his face.

At sight of him lo bow'd his grace,  
And Daniel deign'd a nod,

I've seen Sir Robert & 'tis done  
If you've kept me in by G—  
At hearing this I limp'd away,  
Instructed where to apply.

All favour begging Scots may take  
The hint as well as I.



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